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Public input sought on freeway links

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State transportation officials are looking for community comments on a network of proposed freeway projects aiming to relieve traffic congestion in the Southwest Valley.

Studies are under way to determine the best routes for extending Loop 303 from Interstate 10 south to Maricopa County 85 and for creating Arizona 801, another proposed freeway link that is expected to serve as an east-west reliever for I-10. That reliever, in turn, is expected to tie into the future South Mountain Freeway, or Loop 202.

Area residents and community leaders attended a public meeting Thursday in Buckeye to get an update on the latest freeway plans.

Brenda Holland, who serves on the Goodyear City Council, said one of the major concerns was what routes will be selected.

"They took our ideas and our questions down, and they're incorporating those into their plans," she said. "They're not going to be able to make everyone happy."

The series of proposed freeway loops and state routes will serve as a way to ease traffic congestion on I-10, which would be a welcome relief for its regular travelers. It will also provide a bridge between the Southeast and Southwest Valley.

Ben Hirsh, a real estate agent who has lived in Goodyear for about 10 years, is looking forward to the traffic improvements.

"I drive (I-10) from Goodyear all the way to central Phoenix, and I think the State Route 801 is a fantastic idea," he said.

He wonders about the north-south alignment for Loop 303 considering that homes continue to sprout in the area.

"I'm concerned about the new homes going up along Cotton Lane, from I-10 south to (Maricopa County) 85," he said. "If I were a homeowner in that area, in the Cotton Flower subdivision or in Canyon Trails, I'd be a little nervous, not knowing what's going to happen."

The freeway projects are part of a Regional Transportation Plan that voters approved in November 2004. And even though construction isn't expected on them for another two decades, getting the preliminary work done, such as design and environmental studies, makes it easier for transportation officials to later accelerate the projects.

Diane D'Angelo, a spokeswoman for the Arizona Department of Transportation, said more public meetings are scheduled for early January and late spring.

Specific dates and locations haven't been set.

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